

July 2, 2002

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER
DIVERSITY AWARDS PROGRAM

1. Nominations are being accepted for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Diversity Awards Program. Established in 1993 by the Under Secretary for Health's Diversity Advisory Board, this award program recognizes those VHA facilities that have advanced the cause of diversity in the workplace and provided a positive role model for other facilities through an educational project, program or activity that demonstrates support for diversity and empowers employees and/or teams.
2. The VHA policy defines diversity as: "those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet present in other individuals and groups." Managing diversity is defined as: "a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works for all employees."
3. Any VHA facility, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), or VHA Central Office Program Office that has developed initiatives to increase awareness of diversity and improve diversity within their organization is eligible for this award. Each applicant is to submit an application package which contains detailed information on the diversity program, its unique activity(ies), and the involvement of senior leadership. The requirements for the application process are found in Attachment A.
4. Recognition will be given to organization(s) that have developed an innovative, successful program based on achievements in diversity (mentoring, education and training, career advancement, etc.). ***Such programs are not to be confused with required special emphasis programs.*** The award winner will receive the Diversity trophy and the Honorable Mention recipients will receive framed certificates.
5. Application packages will be screened by a subcommittee of the Diversity Advisory Board. Winners will be chosen on the basis of their application by an ad hoc committee comprised of members who have the background and expertise to serve on the committee. The determination of the winners depends fully on the information provided in the application package. ***NOTE: The nominated program needs to demonstrate a commitment to policies and programs that promote diversity in the Federal workplace.***
6. Applications should address and will be judged on the following criteria:
 - a. Senior leadership's involvement in planning and implementing the program and/or activity.
 - b. The extent to which the program and/or activity encourages a diverse environment.

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c. The support the program and/or activity provides for employee development and/or recognition.

d. The extent to which the diversity program and/or activity supports the organization's strategic goals for diversity.

e. The program and/or activity's established outcome measures with results demonstrated over time.

f. The program and/or activity assists the organization in communicating diversity plans and/or goals throughout the organization.

g. The impact of the program and/or activity is assessed and used for continuous improvement and feedback on the changes provided to employees.

7. All application materials are to be typewritten, single-spaced and no longer than three pages. Acronyms are to be defined the first time used. Where appropriate, a photograph illustrating the initiative may be included. **NOTE:** *The photo may be used in one or more Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and VHA publications.* An original and four copies of each application are due no later than August 30, 2002. Applications received after that date will not be considered. The application package must include a signed endorsement from the facility, VISN or program office Director. The materials are to be forwarded through proper channels to:

Mrs. Dot Brady (10A2A)
Management Support Office
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

8. Questions concerning this award program may be directed to Dr. Dorothy J. Anderson, Chairperson, Diversity Advisory Board Award Subcommittee, at 601-680-6841, ext. 270, or by e-mail **at** Dorothy.Anderson@lrn.va.gov.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 7/3/2002
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mailed 7/3/2002

ATTACHMENT A

**SAMPLE FORMAT FOR APPLYING TO THE
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S
DIVERSITY AWARDS PROGRAM**

1. Name and address of the facility, network, or office.
2. Name, title, address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address for the Point of Contact.
3. Respond to the following award criteria (should be no longer than three pages) and complete with the signature of the approving management official.
 - a. How is senior leadership involved in planning and implementing the program and/or activity?
 - b. How does the program and/or activity encourage a diverse environment?
 - c. How does the program and/or activity provide support for employee development and/or recognition.
 - d. How does the diversity program and/or activity support the organization's strategic goal(s) for diversity? **NOTE:** *State the goal(s).*
 - e. What are the program and/or activity's established outcome measures. **NOTE:** *Provide results demonstrated over time.*
 - f. What role does the program and/or activity play in assisting the organization in communicating diversity plans and/or goals to employees?
 - g. Describe the impact the program and/or activity is having on the organization and its employees. How the impact was determined and what process was used to ensure continuous improvement and feedback to the employees on the changes?